

BAD 1950s EC COMICS!

IMPACT



NO. 8
JUNE

SHOCK



200
2¢
CANADA

SUSPENSTORIES

JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION
IN THE
TRADITION!



WALTON

BACK ISSUES!!

THE COMIC YOU HOLD IN YOUR HANDS IS PART OF THE CHRONOLOGICAL, FACSIMILE REPRINTING OF THE **FAMOUS** (AND INFAMOUS!) **EC COMICS** LINE OF THE EARLY 1950s! WE STARTED WITH THE **FIRST ISSUE** OF EACH TITLE AND ARE ON OUR WAY TO THE **BITTER END!** GET ON THE BANDWAGON, AND **FILL IN THE GAPS** IN YOUR COLLECTION FROM THIS BACKLIST!!



CRYPT #1



CRYPT #2



CRYPT #3



CRYPT #4



CRYPT #5



CRYPT #6



W SCI #1



W SCI #2



W SCI #3



W SCI #4



W SCI #5



W SCI #6



SHOCK #1



SHOCK #2



SHOCK #3



SHOCK #4



SHOCK #5



SHOCK #6

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PIECEMEAL

THE BLOOD-GURDLING SCREAMS THAT HAD FILLED THE NIGHT HAD FADED NOW, AND THE SILENCE HAD CLOSED IN ONCE MORE. ERIC STAGGERED ACROSS THE LUSH LAWN TOWARD THE HOUSE, SOBING. THE FULL MOON BATHED HIM IN ITS COLD LIGHT, SHIMMERING OVER HIS WHITE WET BODY. HE WAS GLAD IN BATHING TRUNKS AND STREAMS OF SCARLET DOZZED FROM THE SLASHES IN HIS PALE FLESH. IN HIS RIGHT HAND, ERIC CLUTCHED A BLOOD-SOAKED TOWEL, PRESSING IT AGAINST THE SHREDDED STUMP OF HIS LEFT ARM...

SIDNEY KNEW HE KNEW...
ALL THE TIME! WE...
WE UNDERESTIMATED
HIM!



**A HORROR
SUSPENSE STORY**

ERIC STUMBLED ONTO THE FLAG-STONE PATIO AND FLUNG HIMSELF AGAINST THE DOOR, POUNDING IT WITH HIS RED-STAINED FIST. INSIDE, THE HOUSE WAS SILENT. NO ONE STIRRED. OF COURSE NOT! HE AND SALLY HAD SEEN TO THAT...



OH, LORD! I NEED
A DOCTOR! I'M
BLEEDING TO DEATH!
AND THE DOOR'S
LOCKED! SALLY
MUST HAVE FORGOT-
TEN TO... TO RELEASE
THE CATCH...

THE HOUSE WAS STILL. THE POUNDING GREW WEAK. ERIC SLID TO THE COLD PATIO, HIS HEAD WHIRLING. THE BLACK VELVET CURTAIN OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS BEGAN TO FALL, SHUTTING OUT THE NIGHT, SHUTTING OUT THE MOONLIGHT. A POOL OF BLOOD FLOODED OUT OVER THE NEATLY LAID FLAGSTONES...



SALLY... SOB...
SALLY...

THERE WAS ONLY STILLNESS NOW. THE QUIET STILLNESS OF NUMBED SENSES. ERIC TRIED TO FIGHT OFF THE BLACKNESS BUT IT STUBBORNLY GLUNG TO HIM, DRIVING THE SIGHT FROM HIS EYES, THE PAIN FROM HIS AMPUTATED ARM. AND THEN, HE COULD SEE SALLY...COMING TOWARD HIM...OUT OF THE BLACKNESS. LOVELY...YOUNG...SALLY...



ERIC... DARLING...

SUDDENLY, THE BLACKNESS WAS GONE. THE MOONLIGHT SPARKLED ON THE SURFACE OF THE POOL WATER. SALLY STOOD BEFORE HIM, HER YOUNG FULL BODY REVEALINGLY ENGAGED IN A BATHING SUIT...



SIDNEY! IS HE...?

ASLEEP! I GAVE HIM THE PILLS AND HE WENT OFF LIKE A BABY. HE WON'T BOTHER US...

AND THEN SHE WAS IN HIS ARMS, AND HE WAS HOLDING HER CLOSE, HIS LIPS SEARCHING FOR HERS, FINDING THEM, AND FEELING OF THEIR SOFTNESS...



SALLY, BABY! ERIC... MY SWEET...

HOW MANY TIMES HAD THEY MET LIKE THAT, THERE, BY THE POOL, IN THE DARKNESS? HOW MANY TIMES HAD THEY KISSED, AND HELD EACH OTHER, THEN PLAYFULLY DIVED INTO THE WARM STILL WATER?...



HOW MANY TIMES? HOW HAD IT ALL STARTED? THE POOL FADED. THE DARKNESS CLOSED IN AGAIN. THEN ERIC SAW HIMSELF STANDING BEFORE HIS ELDER BROTHER'S PALATIAL HOUSE... SUITCASE IN HAND...



ERIC! ERIC, YOU SURPRISE, OLD SON OF A SIDNEY! I WAS PASSING THROUGH TOWN BETWEEN JOBS AND THOUGHT I'D LOOK YOU UP!

SIDNEY HAD BEEN DELIGHTED TO SEE HIM, AND THEN, SALLY CAME OUT OF NOWHERE AND ERIC SAW HER, AND THE WHOLE WORLD WENT TOSPY-TURVY...



SALLY DEAR! THIS IS THE KID BROTHER I'VE TOLD YOU SO MUCH ABOUT! THIS IS ERIC! ERIC... MY WIFE... SALLY!

HELLO, ERIC!

SALLY...

THAT WAS THE START OF IT. THEY HAD LOOKED AT EACH OTHER FOR THE FIRST TIME AND IT HAD HAPPENED, LIKE A TIDAL WAVE RUSHING ACROSS A TINY TROPICAL ISLE... ENGULFING...



SIDNEY WROTE ME ABOUT YOU, HE SPOKE ABOUT SALLY, BUT I NEVER EXPECTED... YOU AS THOUGH THIS! YOU'RE VERY LOVELY. YOU WERE A CHILD, ERIC. I... I HAD PICTURED YOU SO DIFFERENTLY...

AND THEN, DINNER THAT FIRST NIGHT... AND ERIC STEALING GLANCES AT SALLY SEATED OPPOSITE HIM... THEIR EYES MEETING WHILE SIDNEY CHATTED AIMLESSLY...

AFTER DINNER I MUST SHOW YOU MY MARINE COLLECTION, ERIC. I'VE RECENTLY ACQUIRED SOME RARE SPECIMENS!

HUH? OH!
SURE, SIDNEY!
SURE!



SIDNEY... THE NATURALIST... THE EXPERT ON UNDERSEA FLORA AND FAUNA. THE SHELF-LINED LIBRARY WITH ITS MYRIAD OF GLOWING TANKS...

AMAZING, SIDNEY! WHERE DO YOU GET THEM? I MEAN, THESE FISH...

THEY'RE SHIPPED TO ME FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD, ERIC! THIS IS THE MOST VALUABLE COLLECTION IN THE STATES! AND NEXT MONTH...



SIDNEY... RANTING ABOUT HIS COLLECTION... ABOUT NEW ADDITIONS... FUTURE SHIPMENTS! AND ALL THE WHILE HE PRETENDED TO BE LISTENING, ERIC WAS STUDYING SALLY... VIVACIOUS SALLY...

...THE ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND IN CAPTIVITY. I'D SAY IT'S WORTH ROUGHLY SIX HUNDRED DOLLARS!

YOU... YOU LOOK TIRED, ERIC! COME, SIDNEY! LET'S LET ERIC GO TO BED! I'LL SHOW YOU YOUR ROOM, ERIC!



SHE MOVED AHEAD OF HIM UP THE THICKLY CARPETED STAIRS. HE WATCHED HER TRIM FIGURE GLOVE ALONG THE HALL AND OPEN THE GUEST-ROOM DOOR...

I BROUGHT YOUR THINGS UP ALREADY! NOPE YOU DON'T MIND!

NOT AT ALL, SALLY! THANKS!



HE BRUSHED PAST HER AND THEY TOUCHED, AND HE BREATHED DEEPLY, INHALING HER WOMAN SMELL AND THE PERFUME IN HER HAIR...

SIDNEY... HAS TROUBLE SLEEPING. I HAVE TO GIVE HIM SLEEPING PILLS!

OH?... ON?...



HE STOOD OVER HER, LOOKING DOWN INTO HER SOFT EYES, AT HER FULL LIPS...

WE HAVE A SALT-WATER POOL OUT BACK! I USUALLY TAKE A DIP AT NIGHT AFTER HE'S ASLEEP! PERHAPS YOU...

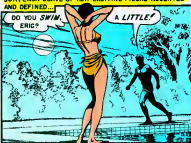
I'LL JOIN YOU! I'D LOVE IT!



AND WHEN SHE'D GONE, HE'D STOOD AT THE WINDOW AND STARED OUT AT THE QUIET POOL LYING LIKE A MIRROR IN THE DARKNESS... UNTIL SHE'D COME OUT OF THE HOUSE AND LOOKED UP AT HIS WINDOW AND WAVED...



MOMENTS LATER, HE SLIPPED DOWNSTAIRS AND OUT INTO THE COOL NIGHT AIR, HIS FLESH TINGLED AS HE APPROACHED THE POOL. SALLY STOOD THERE IN HER SUIT, EACH CURVE OF HER EXCITING FIGURE ACCENTED AND DEFINED...



THEN THEY WERE IN THE WATER, THE WARM POOL WATER... STILL HOLDING THE HEAT OF THE DAY, AND THEY WERE SWIMMING... AND LAUGHING ...



AND LATER, SITTING AT THE POOL EDGE, SUCKING ON CIGARETTES, AND WHISPERING...



...THE DIM LIGHT FROM THE HOUSE, FALLING ON HER FACE, REFLECTING IN HER HAIR...



...THE TIDAL WAVE RUSHING HEAD-
LONG...



... LEAVING IN ITS WAKE, AFTER ITS FURY IS SPENT, ONLY RUIN AND SADNESS...



AND SIDNEY? WHAT ABOUT HIM? WHAT WILL WE TELL HIM? HE...



SO ERIC HAD STAYED. HE COULDN'T HELP HIMSELF. BEAUTIFUL SALLY? DESIRABLE SALLY? LIVING A LIFE...



IT'S COME, ERIC! LOOK! THE SHIPMENT FROM BORNEO!

WHAT'S IN IT, SIDNEY?

SIDNEY UNPACKED THE CAREFULLY CRATED CAN. HE EMPTIED IT INTO A WAITING TANK. A SINGLE MULTI-COLORED FISH...



ISN'T IT A BEAUTY, ERIC? IT'S A RARE SPECIMEN!

VERY INTERESTING, SIDNEY!

THE INTERMINABLE DAYS... WITH SIDNEY, WHILE HE FUTTERED AROUND THE LIBRARY, FEEDING HIS COLLECTION OF SEA LIFE...

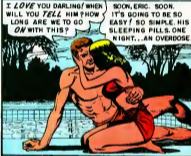


AND NEXT MONTH, THE SHIPMENT I'VE WAITED A YEAR TO RECEIVE!

OH?

DINNER'S READY, BOYS!

AND THOSE ALL TOO SHORT NIGHTS BY THE POOL... WITH SALLY...



I LOVE YOU DARLING! WHEN WILL YOU TELL HIM? HOW LONG ARE WE TO GO ON WITH THIS?

SOON, ERIC. SOON. IT'S GOING TO BE SO EASY! SO SIMPLE. HIS SLEEPING PILLS. ONE NIGHT... AN OVERDOSE.

THE SHOCKING REVELATION OF WHAT SALLY WAS PLANNING...



YOU MEAN... GASP... MURDER?

IT'S THE ONLY WAY, DEAR! THEN ALL OF THIS WILL BE OURS! ALL OURS!

YES! BUT MURDER...



IT WILL BE AN ACCIDENT, SWEET! HOLD ME.

OH, SALLY... ERIC! DARLING!



THE MADNESS OF IT. THE SHEER HORROR OF WHAT THEY PLANNED TO DO! AND THOSE NIGHTS, IN THE POOL, WITH THE WORLD AND SIDNEY SO FAR AWAY...

HE EXPECTS HIS SHIPMENT TOMORROW. SOME RARE FISH. I'LL TELL THEM HE COULDN'T SLEEP! HE TOOK TOO MANY PILLS.

HOW WILL YOU...?



I'LL GIVE HIM HIS USUAL AMOUNT... DISSOLVE THE REST IN HIS WATER, HE'LL NEVER KNOW!

I'M... I'M GOLD, SALLY! LET'S GO INSIDE...



AND THEN, THIS EVENING... SITTING AT DINNER...

THE DOORBELL! I'LL GET IT! IT'S PROBABLY FOR ME! MY SHIPMENT...

ALL RIGHT, DEAR!



SIDNEY... HURRYING OFF... LIKE A CHILD... EXCITED WITH A NEW TOY...

THIS IS IT, HONEY! AFTER TONIGHT, WE'RE FREE!

I... I HOPE SO, SALLY! I HOPE SO!



SIDNEY FINALLY RETURNED TO THE DINNER TABLE...

MEET ME AS USUAL, ERIC... AT THE POOL... TONIGHT!

HUSH! WHAT A BEAUTY! HE WAIT TILL YOU SEE IT!



... AND THEN, AFTER DINNER...

WELL, SID? WHAT ABOUT YOUR NEW SPECIMEN?

G'WON! I'LL SHOW IT TO YOU!

NOT TONIGHT, SIDNEY! I'M TIRED! I'D LIKE TO GO TO BED!



ALL RIGHT, DEAR! TOMORROW THEN, ERIC! WE'RE TURNING IN!

GOOD-NIGHT, ERIC!

GOOD-NIGHT, YOU TWO!



THE POOL WAS STILL WHEN ERIC GAVE OUT TO IT. THE MOONLIGHT SHIMMERED ON ITS SURFACE. HE WAITED, PACING UP AND DOWN. FINALLY, SALLY CAME OUT OF THE BLACKNESS, TOWARD HIM...

ERIC... DARLING...



SALLY STOOD BEFORE HIM, HER YOUNG FULL BODY REVEALINGLY ENCASED IN HER BATHING SUIT...

SIDNEY! IS HE...?

ASLEEP! I GAVE HIM THE PILLS AND HE WENT OFF LIKE A BABY. HE WON'T BOTHER US... EVER AGAIN! HE'LL BE DEAD IN AN HOUR!



AND THEN SHE WAS IN HIS ARMS, AND HE WAS HOLDING HER CLOSE, HIS LIPS SEARCHING FOR HERS, FINDING THEM, AND FEELING OF THEIR SOFTNESS...

SALLY, BABY! ERIC... MY SWEET



SHE PUSHED AWAY FROM HIM, GASPING...

I'M YOURS NOW, ERIC! ALL YOURS!

SALLY...



HER EYES SPARKLED, PLAYFULLY! SHE DARTED TOWARD THE POOL EDGE...

... BUT IF YOU WANT ME, YOU'LL HAVE TO CATCH ME...

COME BACK HERE, YOU LITTLE TEASE...



THE SPLASH. THE LONG WAIT TILL SALLY'S HEAD APPEARED. BUT SHE CAME UP WITH NO SMILE ON HER FACE. SHE CAME UP SCREAMING...

ERIC! MY GOD!



AND THE THRASHING... AND ERIC DIVING IN... NOT KNOWING WHAT WAS MAKING SALLY SCREAM...



THE HOUSE WAS STILL. THE POUNDING HAD STOPPED. ERIC LAY IN A POOL OF BLOOD ON THE COLD PATIO. THE LAST DROP OF LIFE SEEPED OUT OF HIS ARM-STUMP ONTO THE RED-STAINED FLAGSTONES...



UPSTAIRS, SIDNEY GASPED AND SIGHED... HIS LAST BREATH RUSHING OUTWARD FROM HIS COLLAPSING LUNGS...



AND BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE SWIMMING POOL, OUTLINED IN THE FILTERED MOONLIGHT, SIDNEY'S HEWEST ACQUISITION, A *MAN-EATING SHARK*, TWISTED AND CAVORTED IN THE BLOOD-RED BRINE-WATER...



... ITS HUNGER FINALLY SATISFIED AFTER ITS LONG JOURNEY! SALLY HAD BEEN THE *MAIN COURSE*, AND ERIC'S ARM... *DESSERT*...

THE
END.

A SHOCK SUSPENSE STORY

THE ASSAULT!

THE DOWNPOUR HAD BEGUN AGAIN. THE RAINDROPS PATTERNED ON THE CAR-TOPS, RAN IN TINY RIVULETS DOWN THEIR WINDSHIELDS, AND DROPPED IN MINIATURE WATERFALLS TO THE RAGING TORRENT SWEEPING BESIDE THE CURBSTONE. THE MEN Huddled UNDER THE SHELTER OF THE PORCH, THEIR LIPS SET TIGHT, THEIR EYES PEERING INTO THE DARKNESS BEYOND THE SHEETS OF FALLING WATER. MRS. CARTWRIGHT SAT IN THE ROCKER, SOBBING. HER HUSBAND STOOD BEHIND HER, STROKING HER SHOULDER, COMFORTING HER...

SOMETHING... SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAS HAPPENED TO HER! I KNOW IT! I FEEL IT! OH, LUCK... SOB... MY BABY! MY... SOB... BABY!

PLEASE, HONEY! THEY'LL FIND HER! DON'T CRY! SHE'LL BE ALL RIGHT... YOU WAIT AND SEE!

WHAT DOY'SAY, BOYS? SOON AS THE RAIN LET'S UP A LITTLE, WE'LL TAKE THE CAR AND SCOUT AROUND TOWN AGAIN!

IN THE EAST, THE FIRST GREY STREAKS OF DAWN GLOWED SADLY AGAINST THE HEAVY RAINCLOUDS. IT WAS ALMOST SIX A.M. MRS. CARTWRIGHT SHOOK HER HEAD...

IT'S BEEN ALMOST THIRTY-SIX HOURS SINCE SHE LEFT. WHEN SHE DIDN'T COME THE FIRST NIGHT, I THOUGHT SHE'D STAYED OVER ONE OF HER FRIENDS' HOUSES LIKE SHE ALWAYS DOES. BUT THEN YESTERDAY, AND ALL LAST NIGHT, NOT A WORD!

SOMEONE'S COMIN'! SOMEDNE'S COMIN' DOWN THE BLOCK! MAYBE IT'S ONE OF THE BOYS! MAYBE.



SHE CAME OUT OF THE WET, GREY DAWN. SHE CAME WITH HER HAIR STRINGY AND RUNNING AND HER FACE WHITE AND FRIGHTENED. SHE LOOKED AT THE PARKED CARS, AND THE GATHERED MEN WHO'D BEEN SEARCHING ALL NIGHT FOR HER, AND AT HER MOTHER AND FATHER...

IT...IT'S HER!

LUCY! LUCY!

MY BABY! MY BABY!

CRIPES, YOUNG LADY! THE WHOLE TOWN'S OUT HUNTIN' YOU!



SHE LOOKED AT THE MEN WITH THEIR ANGRY FACES, AND AT HER MOTHER'S SWOLLEN EYES AND AT HER FATHER'S STERN GRIMACE, AND SUDDENLY, SHE BEGAN TO CRY...



OH, MOM! MOM! DADDY... SOB... SOB...

BABY! BABY, WHAT IS IT?

WHERE WERE YOU FOR TWO NIGHTS, YOUNG LADY?

LEAVE 'EM ALONE, SAM! LET HER FOLKS DO THE TALKIN'!

SHE STUMBLED UP THE PORCH STEPS AND THREW HERSELF BEFORE THE ROCKER, SOBING. MRS. CARTWRIGHT GRABBED HER DAUGHTER'S HEAD IN HER LAP, STROKING HER DRENCHED HAIR...



YOU... YOU HAD US WORRIED SICK, LUCY! WORRIED SICK! WHERE WERE YOU LAST NIGHT... AND ALL DAY YESTERDAY... AND THE NIGHT BEFORE...?

OH, MOMMA! IT... IT WAS AWFUL!

WHAT WAS AWFUL, LUCY? TELL US WHERE YOU WERE! TELL US!

LUCY CARTWRIGHT LOOKED UP AND THE TEARS STREAMED FROM HER SEVENTEEN YEAR OLD EYES AND DOWN HER PALE WHITE CHEEKS. THE WORDS ERUPTED FROM HER MOUTH, THEY CAME FULL OF FRIGHT AND FEAR AND SHAME...

A HUSH SEEMED TO FALL OVER EVERYTHING, EVEN THE INCESSANT RAIN SUDDENLY LET UP. IT WAS SILENT ON THE CARTWRIGHT PORCH SAVE FOR THE BREATHING OF THE MEN AND LUCY'S PITIFUL SOBBING...

THE MEN STARED AT LUCY! THEY STARED AT HER WIDE FRIGHTENED EYES AND HER QUIVERING LIPS AND HER YOUNG BODY, AND THE ANGER GREW IN THEM. THEY WERE SILENT BUT THE ANGER BREWED. LUCY'S VOICE WAS PRACTICALLY A SCREAM...



IT WAS... IT WAS OLD HODGES! HE... HE FORGED ME TO STAY IN HIS CABIN. HE LOCKED ME IN... AND HE DID THINGS!



WHAT... WHAT THINGS, LUCY? WHAT DID HE DO?

I... I... SOB... I CAN'T TELL YOU! SOB! THEY... THEY WERE... SOB... TERRIBLE THINGS!



HE KEPT ME THERE! HE WOULDN'T LET ME GO. HE KEPT ME THERE ALL NIGHT AND ALL DAY AND ALL LAST NIGHT. THIS MORNING, HE FELL ASLEEP AND I ESCAPED.

OLD HODGES, THE TOWN RECLUSE, THE TOWN DERELICT, QUIET OLD HODGES, LIVING ALONE ON THE OUTSKIRTS IN HIS SHABBY CABIN, KEEPING TO HIMSELF, QUEER OLD HODGES...

MR. CARTWRIGHT'S FISTS CLENCHED AND UNCLENCHED. FINALLY HE SHOUTED, AND HIS VOICE WAS HOARSE AND ANGRY AND WILD...



HE GAVE MY KID GANDY ONCE... TOLD HER HE HAD A PIRATES' TREASURE IN HIS SHACK.

I WARNED MINE TO STAY AWAY FROM HIM. NEVER TRUSTED HIM!

HE... HE'S A DEGENERATE. HE OUGHT TO BE LYNCHED!



WELL WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR, FOR GOD'S SAKE? LOOK AT MY BABY! LOOK WHAT HE'S DONE TO HER! LET'S GET HIM!

G'MON!

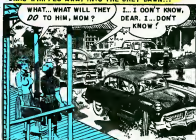
WE'LL TEACH HIM!

THEY STAMPEDED DOWN THE PORCH STEPS WITH INFURIATED FORCE, THEY SLAMMED INTO THEIR CARS AND THEY SHOUTED AND SWORE, THEY WERE ANGRY MEN. THEY WERE MEN WITH A MISSION...

WE'LL PICK UP THE OTHERS!
HE'LL BE SORRY, THE DIRTY @#X!
O'WON! THE POOR KID!



THE COUGHING OF THE GOLO WET ENGINES, AND THE ROAR AS THEY SPEED OFF, AND THE GRINDING OF GEARS BLOTTED OUT THEIR SHOUTS. LUCY LIFTED HER HEAD FROM HER MOTHER'S LAP AND WATCHED AS THEIR CARS WHIPPED AWAY INTO THE GREY DAWN...



WHAT... WHAT WILL THEY DO TO HIM, MOM?
I... I DON'T KNOW, DEAR, I... DON'T KNOW!

BY THE TIME THE MOTORCADE REACHED OLD HOOGE'S GABIN, THE AMOUNT OF CARS HAD DOUBLED. THEY PULLED UP BEFORE THE SHACK WITH A SCREAMING AND SQUEALING OF BRAKES. ANGRY MEN Poured FROM THEIR INNARDS, THEY CAME WITH STICKS AND GLUBS AND ANGRY FACES...

THE DOOR TO THE REGLUSE'S SHACK GRUMPLED LIKE PAPER UNDER THE HEAVY ONSLAUGHT. THE OLD MAN SAT UP IN HIS BED WITH A START, AS THEY JAMMED IN. THE COLOR DRAINED FROM HIS FACE AND HE GLUTCHED HIS THREADBARE PATCHED BLANKET UP AROUND HIS NECK...



THE DEGENERATE!
WE'LL TEACH HIM!
HE SHOULD'VE BEEN KICKED OUT OF TOWN LONG AGO!



WHA... WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOU KNOW @#X?! WELL!
GET HIM!

THEY MOVED IN. THE OLD MAN FLAIED, HIS SCREAM ECHOED THROUGH THE CAMP MORNING AIR...

THE ANGRY GLUBS AND THE ANGRY STICKS ROSE AND FELL... ROSE AND FELL... AND THE SCREAM FADED...

THE PATCHED BLANKET TURNED GRIMSON AND THE WHITE FORM BENEATH TWITCHED, THEN LAY STILL...



THAT'S ENOUGH!
HE'S DEAD!

THE SUN ROSE, PUSHING AWAY THE LAST OF THE BLACK RAIN CLOUDS. THE DAY WORE ON. ON STREETCORNERS, IN BARS, IN STORES THROUGHOUT THE TOWN, THE CONVERSATIONS WERE ALL THE SAME...



THEY DID RIGHT! HE DESERVED IT!

THE POOR KID! WHAT A HORRIBLE EXPERIENCE.

HE SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN A FAIR TRIAL. IT WASN'T RIGHT WHAT THEY DID!

IT WAS TOWARD AFTERNOON THAT THE DOORBELL OF THE CARTWRIGHT HOME JANGLED FOR THE HUNDRETH TIME. MR. CARTWRIGHT OPENED IT WEARILY...



YES?

I... I WANT TO SEE LUCY! TELL HER... TELL HER GEORGE IS HERE. TELL HER I WANT TO SEE HER.

HE WAS TALL AND IN HIS LATE TWENTIES OR EARLY THIRTIES. HIS EYES WERE TIRE... LOOKING AS IF HE'O JUST GOTTEN UP. HE NEEDED A SHAVE...



SHE DOESN'T WANT TO BE DISTURBED! SHE DOESN'T WANT TO SEE ANYONE. SHE'S IN HER ROOM AND...

SHE'LL SEE ME! ONE SIDE.

HE PUSHED PAST MR. CARTWRIGHT AND STRODE THROUGH THE HOUSE...



NOW JUST A MINUTE, YOUNG MAN! YOU'VE GOT A NERVE... TO... YOUNG MAN!

WHO IS IT, DADDY? WHO, OH! IT'S YOU, GEORGE!

I WANT TO TALK TO YOU, LUCY!



THERE'S NOTHING TO TALK ABOUT, GEORGE! NOTHING...

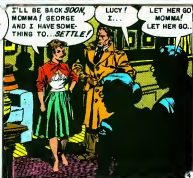
I JUST HEARD ABOUT IT... ABOUT HODGES... AND ABOUT YOU... AND WHAT THEY DID TO HIM. TO OLD HODGES!



LUCY? IS THIS MAN...?

IT'S ALL RIGHT, DADDY! COME ON, GEORGE! WE'LL GO FOR A WALK! I'O RATHER NOT TALK... HERE!

LUCY! WHEN ARE YOU COMING BACK? WHO IS THIS MAN?



I'LL BE BACK SOON, MOMMA! GEORGE AND I HAVE SOMETHING TO... SETTLE!

LUCY! I...

LET HER GO MOMMA! LET HER GO...

IT WAS QUIET IN THE WOODS... IT WAS ALMOST NIGHT AND THE BIRDS HAD STOPPED THEIR SINGING. GEORGE HELD HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS AND HE SOBBED, HIS WORDS FALTERED... BUT HE SHOOK THEM OUT...

I FELL IN LOVE WITH YOU THE MINUTE I LAID EYES ON YOU, LUCY, YOU KNEW THAT, DIDN'T YOU?



'REMEMBER WHEN WE MET... IN THAT ROADSIDE JOINT? YOU CAME IN OUT OF THE NIGHT... ALONE...'

HELLO! NO DATE?

UH-UH! INTERESTED IN FILLING THE VAGANCY?



'I PROUD YOU WERE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL I'D EVER SEEN. WE MUST HAVE DANCED TO EVERY RECORD IN THAT GRUMMY JUKE-BOX...'

I GOT A CAR OUTSIDE. LUCY! WANT TO GO FOR A RIDE?

SURE, GEORGE! WAIT'LL I FIX MY FACE!



'REMEMBER HOW WE DROVE AROUND AND FINALLY PARKED NEAR THE LAKE...'

LIKE ME, GEORGE?

LIKE YOU FINE, LUCY!



'HOW I TOOK YOU IN MY ARMS... AND KISSED YOU... AND NOW THE MOON SPARKLED IN YOUR EYES... AND HOW I HELD YOU AND WE WERE CLOSE...'

ON, GEORGE...

DARLING...



THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME, WASN'T IT, LUCY? THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME IT HAPPENED... IN MY CAR... BY THE LAKE... NEARLY THREE MONTHS AGO, BUT THERE WERE OTHER TIMES, WEREN'T THERE?'

IT'S... IT'S ALMOST MORNING, GEORGE! I'VE GOT TO GET HOME! THE FOLKS WILL WORRY!

WHAT WILL YOU TELL THEM, DEAREST?



'YOU SLEPT OVER AT A GIRL FRIEND'S HOUSE, DIDN'T YOU, LUCY? THAT'S WHAT YOU TOLD THEM. BUT YOU LIED, DIDN'T YOU? YOU LIED! YOU SPENT THE NIGHT WITH ME... AT MY PLACE...'

LET ME OFF HERE! I'LL WALK THE REST OF THE WAY, GEORGE!

OKAY, HONEY!



'I KNEW THE OLD MAN, LUCY... OLD HODGES! I KNEW HIM WELL. HE WAS A GOOD MAN. HE KEPT TO HIMSELF... BUT HE WAS HARMLESS. I TOLD HIM ABOUT YOU...'

SHE SOUNDS WONDERFUL, GEORGE! SOMEDAY IF YOU'RE NOT TOO ASHAMED TO BRING HER HERE, I'D LIKE TO MEET HER.

ASHAMED, OLD TIMER? WHY SHOULD I BE ASHAMED?



'I LOVED HIM, LUCY! I LOVED HIM LIKE A FATHER. REMEMBER WHEN I BROUGHT YOU UP THERE TO MEET HIM?'

SO THIS IS LUCY! WELL, YOUNG LADY! GEORGE SEEMS TO LIKE YOU AN AWFUL LOT!

THAT I DO, POP! THAT I DO!

C'MON, GEORGE! LET'S GO!



'IT WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE LAST, WASN'T IT? THE NIGHT HE SUPPOSEDLY DID THINGS TO YOU. BUT YOU LIED, DIDN'T YOU LUCY? YOU WEREN'T IN OLD HODGES'S CABIN THAT NIGHT. YOU WERE IN MY PLACE, WEREN'T YOU?'

HONEY! IT'S ALMOST MORNING! I'VE GOT TO TAKE YOU HOME!

NO, GEORGE, NOT NOW! KISS ME!



'SO YOU STAYED, DIDN'T YOU, LUCY? YOU STAYED AT MY PLACE ALL THAT DAY AND INTO THE NEXT NIGHT! AND THEN, TOWARDS MORNING, I PROPOSED. I REMEMBER IT'D BEGUN TO RAIN...'

I... I WANT TO MARRY YOU, LUCY!

MARRY?! GEORGE! DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!



'IT WAS FUNNY, WASN'T IT LUCY! SO FUNNY... TO YOU...'

BUT, LUCY! I LOVE YOU! SURELY... YOU WANT TO MARRY ME! I MEAN, AFTER ALL THIS...

MARRY YOU, GEORGE? DON'T BE SILLY! I'M NOT READY TO MARRY ANYBODY! THIS! THIS IS JUST FOR KICKS!

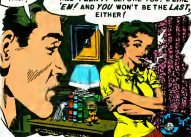


KICKS?! HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?

YOU DON'T THINK YOU'RE THE ONLY MAN I'VE KNOWN, DO YOU, GEORGE? DON'T BE SO EGOTISTICAL! I'VE HAD PLENTY BEFORE YOU! I LIKE 'EM! AND YOU WON'T BE THE LAST, EITHER!

GET OUT! GET OUT, YOU CHEAP LITTLE TRAMP! WHY...

THANKS FOR THE KICKS, GEORGE!



'AND WHEN YOU GOT HOME, YOU LIED TO THEM... DIDN'T YOU? YOU LIED TO SAVE YOUR LOUSY REPUTATION...'

IT WAS... IT WAS **OLD HODGES!** HE... HE FORCED ME TO STAY IN HIS CABIN, HE LOCKED ME IN... AND HE DID THINGS!



'YOU LIED, DIDN'T YOU, LUCY? AND HIS BLOOD WAS ON YOUR HANDS? THEY KILLED HIM, DIDN'T THEY?'

THAT'S ENOUGH! HE'S DEAD!



'AND WHEN I HEARD ABOUT IT, I CAME TO SEE YOU, AND I KNEW WHAT I HAD TO DO...'

ALL RIGHT, GEORGE! YOU WANTED TO TALK TO ME? NOW... TALK!

I'M GOING TO TELL THEM WHERE YOU REALLY WERE, LUCY! I'M GOING TO TELL THEM THE TRUTH!



I DON'T THINK YOU WILL, GEORGE! **OLD HODGES IS DEAD!** WHAT'S DONE CAN'T BE UNDONE! I HAD TO PROTECT MYSELF, BUT YOU WON'T TELL! FOR THE SAME REASON THAT NONE OF THE OTHERS TOLD!

OH, WOULDN'T I? I LOVED HIM, YOU LITTLE @#%*!! I'M GOING TO SEE THAT YOU GET YOURS FOR THIS!

YOU'RE FORGETTING, GEORGE! WHEN YOU OPEN YOUR MOUTH... WHEN YOU TELL THEM WHAT REALLY HAPPENED, YOU'RE SENDING YOURSELF UP THE RIVER FOR TWENTY YEARS! I'M SEVENTEEN, YOU KNOW... AND IN THIS STATE, THERE'S A LAW...

CHOKE...



'WHAT ELSE COULD I DO, LUCY? YOU WERE ROTTEN... THROUGH AND THROUGH! YOU DESERVED IT! IT WAS THE ONLY THING I COULD DO...'

GEORGE... DON'T! WHERE DID YOU GET THAT GUN? DON'T POINT IT AT ME!

IT'S **OLD HOBBS'S**, LUCY! HE KEPT IT... FOR PROTECTION. BUT IT COULDN'T PROTECT HIM FROM AN ANGRY MOB... ANGERED BY LIES...



THEY WERE COMING CLOSER NOW. IN A MINUTE THEY WOULD FIND HIM... AND HE'D HAVE TO TELL THEM THE WHOLE STORY... EXACTLY AS HE'D TOLD IT TO LUCY... TO LUCY... LYING THERE... WITH THE SIX BULLET HOLES IN HER FACE...

SOS... SOS...



SHOCK TALK

President and CEO—Stephan A. Gappi

Publisher—Russ Cochran

Dear Russ,

In SHOCK #7 I really liked "The Small Assassin!" I liked it, but I didn't like the ending. I just bought #7 yesterday. I can't wait till I get my next one! My cousin Tonya takes my comics and slaps them on my head. What should I do?

Dara Conner Cincinnati, OH

Say "ouch!"

Dear Mr. Cochran,

Thank you so much for your heroic effort in reprinting the EC line. I plan to subscribe to all the horror comics and SHOCK and CRIME. I have a question, when will the line of EC's run out? Also, will you write new stories, start over, stop production, or what? Most sincerely,

Chris Pittman Franklin, MA

SHOCK, for example, went to 18 issues—ten more to go. At 90 days per issue, that's 2 1/2 years more. CRYPT, however, went to 30 issues. And so on.

We have no current plans to do new stories in this, uh, venue; nor in fact any plans to announce about the long run.

Dear Mr. Cochran,

I've just read SHOCK #7 which held my interest throughout. "Beauty and the Beast", drawn by Jack Kamen, curdled my blood. It wasn't so much the methods by which the wives are murdered that horrified me, but the way in which the men threateningly tell their wives what to do before murdering them.

"The Bribe!", drawn by Wood, has a dramatic realism in its depiction of corruption and human weakness. The ending of the strip has great irony. Great stuff!

"Infiltration", drawn by Joe Orlando, is another good one. This strip is an interesting variation of the 50s theme of alien infiltration, which perhaps reflects anxieties, insecurities and fears that many people felt during the Cold War period, when the threat of the Red Menace was a very real thing to people who worried about it. Translated into science-fictional terms, this becomes the Red Planet Peri. Last week I watched on TV one of my favorite 50s films, the original black and white version of "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" (56) directed by Don Siegel, [with its] nightmarish scenario [and] clever social comment. The infiltrators in this film have no emotions and don't need love. I've read the novel on which it was based, "The Body Snatchers" by Jack Finney (55) which, in its conclusion, ends up spouting an almost McCarthyist/Churchillian jingoism, eg. "...a fragment of a wartime speech moved through my mind: 'We shall fight them in the fields, and in the hills; we shall never surrender.'"

I like the strip adaption of Ray Bradbury's "The Small Assassin!" I read the story when I was a teenager. It has an atmosphere of fear, hopelessness and menace which this strip adaption also conveys. The comics work of George Evans adds realism to the brooding menace of Bradbury's story.

John Miller Edinburgh, SCOTLAND

And, it's hard to draw a convincing baby! We admit that, when it comes to "Infiltration!" "Body Snatcher" aliens, we would fight, too, by Jingo!

Dear Mr. Cochran and Staff,

I am writing to follow up to my first letter, which appeared in SHOCK #6. You show neither age nor ignorance in never before hearing of The Cramps.

The Cramps are an American rock n' roll band led by Lux Interior and Poison Ivy Rorschach. They play wild "rockably voodoo" saturated with B-culture americana. I had read that Lux in particular was a childhood fan of EC horror comics so naturally I was led to you.

I hope to have shed some light on the subject for you. It is my suggestion that all you Ghoulunahos out there creep down to your local music store and buy some recordings by The Cramps right now. Many thanks again, Mr. Cochran for bringing back these "Notorious" ECs for us all to enjoy! Many, many thanks!

Andy Terwilliger Sunrise, FL

Thanks, I think. (All our lives spent 100 miles from Nashville/Memphis, and we never heard of rockabilly voodoo! We feel deprived!)

Dear Russ,

I just read SHOCK #7 and I'm a little bit confused about "The Bribe!" Why would the club owner pay over a thousand dollars a year to the fire inspector just so he wouldn't declare his club a fire hazard? I mean, surely with that amount of money the owner could put several exits in. Anyway I got to say I enjoy reading all the EC comics. Is it possible to order back issues of HAUNT, VAULT, CRIME and TWO-FISTED?

Nathan Little Montgomery, AL

Wow. \$1000 would buy a lot of carpentry in 1953. But don't be a killjoy! We'd have had a boring story—something along the lines of "Home Improvement."

Yes, ALL back issues are available. See below.

Also available this month are CRYPT and WEIRD SCIENCE. Watch for VAULT, WEIRD FANTASY and TWO-FISTED next month. Don't forget HAUNT, WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY and CRIME. Get them at your local comic book shop or SUBSCRIBE (see our ad in this comic for details).

BACK ISSUES: CRYPT #1, \$3 each (subject to availability). All others up thru issue #3, \$1.50 each, issues 4 and up, \$2 each. Add \$5 per order (\$10 outside US) for SAH.

We want MORE letters! Write to:
SHOCK
RUSS COCHRAN
POB 465
WEST PLAINS MO 65775

**THIS COMIC REPRINTS
SHOCK SUSPENSORIES #8 (APR/MAY 53)**

COVER by Al Feldstein

"Precement"
"The Assault!"
"The Arrival"
"Sleep No More!"

Jack Kamen
Wally Wood
Al Williamson
George Evans

We welcome letters of comment! We cannot promise to acknowledge, publish or answer letters. We will be starting, quantity and length. We automatically acknowledge direct address and zip code when you clearly state you with their publisher. We attempt to acknowledge publication of letters to us so we need your address on the individual letter.

Here I am, bright-eyed and bushy-headed, ready for another foray into the realm of the essthetists. Don't be misled—that's my happy-face! For I am very happy to share the following creepy creations from my rotlan ratiunus of writers and artist! This header illo comes from Derek Malone, age 12, Conway, MO. —CK

THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S PAGE OF
FINE ARTS #17

FIRST, A lovely candle-lit vignette of the Vault-Keeper, caught in a common pastime of his, reading MY comic! Where else do you think he gets his ideas? Artist Andrew Raub shares a few words with us below. —CK



I love EC comics! They are truly frightening, and they send chills up my spine. I just have one question: Is The Old Witch available? I'd like to go on a blind date with her! She's everything a guy could want—good looks, charm, and great cooking abilities! Well, gotta go. The blood I'm writing this in is drying up. Make mine EC! Your fan,

Andrew T. Resh

Webster, NY

She's available, but not advisable when she's visible. 'Cause when it comes to OW, only a BLIND date is possible! —CK

A SHORT Lovecraftian lyric from our Friend Frank, paired with an airdritch drawing from Kurt Krause, Fountain City, WI. —CK

Galactic Thud

A galactic thud
Time and space in a twist
Explorers searched for answers
in the stellar mist

What they found was appalling
Nothing they could do
A ravenous glowing interber
was in the cosmic stew

Frank X. Mattson III
New Holland, PA



Thanks for publishing my poetry and drawing. My poetry always looks better to me in print than it does when I write it; hoo-ha, that's a fact! I have enclosed another poem, all those corpses and tombs get me inspired.

The Merry Old Soul

He loved everyone
And everyone loved him
He'd light up the party
When everything looked dim
The sad day came
He just up and died
A gloom set on the village
and everybody cried
Then one night
The night turned into day,
He was back a little rotten,
Only just a little rotten.
A state to which they didn't cotton!
But who's to say?



Frank X. Mattson III

New Holland, PA

WE'VE PAIRED Frank and Kurt again, because they both work so narrow! Thanks, boys! —CK



SPRINGTIME IS a'coming, and can baseball be far behind? Certainly not, even if it's bare-bones ball as depicted by Little Leaguer Elliott Kazan, age 6, of Richmond HTS, OH. —CK

Send your contribs (not returnable, not too long, not too big, legible double-spaced text &/or bold black art. Warning...we edit!) to:

THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S
PAGE OF FINE ARTS

RUSS COCHRAN
POB 469

WEST PLAINS MO 65775

We welcome contributions. We cannot promise in return: acknowledgment or publish contributions. We will for clarity: accuracy and size. We automatically withdraw: street address and zip code unless you clearly state you wish them published. We attempt to acknowledge publication. To us we need your address on the editorial contribution.



SUICIDE

Patterson bit his lip and sent his fist crashing into the old man's face. There was a cry of pain and the old man staggered back and collapsed against the far wall. Weakly he lifted one hand and tried to protect himself from further attack. Patterson squinted at him, glanced around the basement to make certain that he was alone with the old janitor . . . then stepped forward ominously. His hand emerged from his jacket clutching a revolver.

"P-Please . . ." the old man stammered, "j-just lemme alone. I-I won't say nothing to the cops . . ."

Patterson grimaced and continued to move forward, the barrel of his gun aimed at the old janitor's forehead. "Too bad, Granpa," he muttered, "that you happened to be down here in the basement when I broke into the joint. I ain't gonna have you sing to the police as soon as I amscray . . . I already got two prison stretches behind me. This one, for breaking and entering, makes me a three-time loser! And I don't wanna spend the rest of my life up-river!"

The old man straightened up suddenly and tried to dodge past Patterson . . . but the young man grabbed him by the shirt and swung him around violently. With a grunt Patterson sent the old man hurtling across the basement toward the big high-compression steam boiler. The frightened janitor crashed into the boiler and slumped to the floor, his head resting on the concrete. Patterson continued his ominous advance, his

forefinger tightening around the gun trigger.

"Sorry!" Patterson mumbled as he pulled the trigger. There was a sharp roar, and the old man's body jerked as if he were a puppet being manipulated by strings. Patterson stepped forward and, with his free hand, dragged the old man back to the steam boiler. He prodded the body until it sat propped against the boiler, the old man's head resting on the metal and staring out lifelessly.

"One more shot," Patterson mumbled, "right through the first bullet hole . . . with the gun held close so that the skin gets burned and the cops'll think he pulled the trigger on himself and committed suicide!"

Patterson chuckled aloud: SUICIDE! He'd pull the trigger again, then fasten the murder gun into his victim's hand. The Law'd never be able to prove that the old geezer hadn't croaked himself!

Crouching low over the lifeless janitor, Patterson shoved the gun forward so that the barrel touched the old man's forehead at precisely the point where the fatal bullet had gone seconds before. *SUICIDE*. Patterson repeated as he pulled the trigger.

There was a sharp crash; then a hissing roar that seemed to fill the room in an instant. Patterson tried to leap back, but he was too late. A burst of searing steam shot out of the boiler through the ragged hole Patterson's bullet had made after it ploughed through the old man's head. Patterson screamed in agony, but the steam was already enveloping him . . . cooking the skin of his face so that it was purplish red . . . turning his throat and chest into a darkened lump of seared meat . . . choking off his last breath so that it rattled for a moment. Then he was silent . . . and there was only the steady hiss of the escaping steam . . .

THE ARRIVAL

THEY HAD WATCHED EARTH. THEY HAD SAT ON THEIR FUNCTIONAL WEIGHT-RESTERS BEFORE THEIR HUGE MAGNIFICATION SCREENS AND THEY'D WATCHED THE GREEN PLANET FOR COUNTLESS EONS. EACH MARTIAN NIGHT, WHEN THE SUN HAD SET BEYOND THE RED MOUNTAINS AND THE DEAD SEAS LAY BATHED IN THE FAINT LIGHT FROM THEIR TWO MOONS, THEY'D TURNED ON THEIR TELESCOPE-MACHINES AND THEY'D STUDIED GREEN EARTH AND THEY'D WONDERED. THEY'D WONDERED IF LIFE AS THEY KNEW IT EXISTED THERE TOO AS IT DID HERE ON MARS. AND THEN, ON ONE PARTICULAR NIGHT, THEY'D SEEN IT. THEY'D SEEN THE TINY PIN-POINTS OF LIGHT DOTTING THE LAND AREAS GO OUT. THEY'D SEEN THE FIERY GLOW RUSH AROUND THE GREEN SPHERE, SWALLOWING IT UP IN ONE HORRIBLE BLAZE OF ATOMIC FURY.



LOOK!

BY THE GREAT CANAL OF XNERA!

THE PLANET IS BEING CONSUMED!

AND EVERY MARTIAN NIGHT SINCE THEN, FOR A MILLENNIUM, THEY'D TURNED THEIR TELESCOPE-MACHINES TO THE NOW BLACK PLANET AND THEY'D WAITED HOPEFULLY. BUT NO LIGHTS CAME ON AGAIN. NO GREEN AREAS SPANG UP TO PUSH THE BLACKNESS BACK...

AND THEN, IN THE MARTIAN YEAR OF 131,543, IN WHAT BY OUR MEASUREMENT OF TIME WOULD BE THE NINETY-FIFTH THOUSANDTH YEAR AFTER THE GREAT ATOMIC EXPLOSION, THEY SAW IT. A TINY NEEDLE OF BLUE FLAME STREAKING AWAY FROM BLACK EARTH... STREAKING TOWARD THEIR RED PLANET...

IT IS A DEAD PLANET NOW!

WHAT LIFE THERE MAY HAVE BEEN IS SURELY GONE!

SEE! SEE IT RISING UPWARD! IT IS SOME SORT OF SPACE-SHIP!

AND WE THOUGHT LIFE THERE WAS GONE. WE THOUGHT IT HAD BEEN WIPED OUT!

A SCIENCE-FICTION SUSPENSORY

GROZO MARVELED AT THE FINGER OF FLAME ON THE MAGNIFICATION SCREEN...

AND IN ALL THIS TIME, THEY'VE DONE WHAT WE COULD NEVER DO! THEY'VE DEVELOPED SPACE-TRAVEL!

NOW THEY ARE COMING TO OUR PLANET! TO MARS!



SPDORK WAS SILENT FOR A MOMENT, THEN, WHEN HE SPOKE, HIS MARTIAN WORDS WERE FILLED WITH WONDERMENT AND AWE...

WHAT WILL THEY LOOK LIKE, GROZO? THESE EARTH CREATURES? WILL THEY BE DIFFERENT?

WHO IS TO SAY THAT LIFE ON OTHER PLANETS MUST EVOLVE AS IT DID HERE ON MARS, SPDORK. EVOLUTION IS LIKE A ROAD WITH MANY FORKS. THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO TURN...



PERHAPS THEY WILL BE GHASTLY CREATURES, GROZO! CREATURES THAT WILL SICKEN US WHEN WE GAZE UPON THEM!

PERHAPS! AND IN TURN, MY DEAR SPDORK, WE MAY VERY WELL SICKEN THEM!

IN ANY CASE, SPDORK! WE MUST PREPARE FOR THEIR ARRIVAL!

WHAT IF THEY COME ON A MISSION OF WAR, AND NOT OF PEACE, GROZO?

WE MUST BE PREPARED, GROZO!

GOME! LET US NOTIFY THE GOVERNING COUNCIL! THEY MUST MAKE PLANS!



THE BLUE STREAK OF FLAME IN THE MARTIAN SKY GREW BRIGHTER EACH NIGHT AS IT HURTLIED ACROSS THE BLACK GULF OF SPACE THAT SEPARATED EARTH FROM THE RED PLANET. IN TWO MONTHS, THE FLAME HAD GROWN SO BRIGHT IT WAS VISIBLE DURING THE MARTIAN DAY...

THEY ARE COMING CLOSER, GROZO!

THEY WILL BE HERE, SOON!



AND THEN, ON THE 13RD NIGHT AFTER THE FIRST SIGHTING OF THE MARS-BOUND EARTH SPACE-SHIP, SOMETHING STRANGE HAPPENED. GROZO HAD TURNED ON THE EQUIVALENT OF A RADIO TO LISTEN TO SOME MUSIC, THE JUMBLED GARBLE INTERRUPTED HIS FAVORITE PIECE...

BY THE GREAT CANAL OF ZKOR! WHAT INTERFERENCE IS THIS?

WAIT, GROZO! LISTEN! COULD THOSE GUTTERAL SQUEALS BE A LANGUAGE. AN ALIEN LANGUAGE?



THE TWO MARTIANS LISTENED TO THE SQUAWKING SOUNDS THAT JAMMED THE MUSIC PROGRAM...

PERHAPS IT IS THE EARTH-CREATURES... BROADCASTING ON OUR WAVELENGTHS!

HURRY! GET THE AUTOMATIC TRANSLATOR THAT WE'VE PREPARED FOR THEIR ARRIVAL!

THE AUTOMATIC TRANSLATOR, NEWLY DEVELOPED FOR THE OCCASION, WAS ROLLED OUT OF ITS STORAGE COMPARTMENT...

THERE! IT IS ON!

ZEE...DOEE...ZZT. PTEE... MARS! HELLO, MARS! THIS IS EARTH-ROCKET 029 CALLING MARS. HELLO...

IT IS THEM! IT IS THE EARTH CREATURES! HURRY, SPORK! CALL THE GOVERNMENT TRANSMITTER! WE MUST ANSWER THEM!

HELLO MARS! THIS IS EARTH ROCKET 029 CALLING MARS! AM, IT'S NO USE, CHIEF! THEY DON'T HEAR US!



KEEP TRYING, ANYWAY! WE'VE GOT TO LET THEM KNOW WE'RE COMING ON A PEACEFUL MISSION... SOMEHOW!

OKAY! BUT I THINK IT'S A WASTE OF TIME! THEY'RE PROBABLY SOME IDIOT SAVAGE RAGE!

PUT ME THROUGH TO THE GOVERNMENT TRANSMITTER! QUICKLY!

HELLO, MARS! HELLO, MARS! THIS IS EARTH ROCKET... AW, NUTS!

YES! YES! QUICKLY! SAME WAVELENGTH! YES! BUT STRENGTHEN THE SIGNAL. GIVE IT FULL POWER!

AS YOU WISH, SPORK! ALL RIGHT! GO AHEAD!



THIS IS STUPID, CHIEF! THEY DON'T...

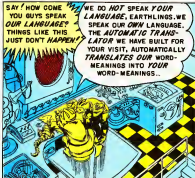
HELLO, EARTH ROCKET 029. HELLO, EARTH ROCKET! THIS IS MARS, ANSWERING...

DO NOT SPEAK TOO FAST, SPORK! THE AUTOMATIC TRANSLATOR...

HEY! DID YOU HEAR THAT, CHIEF? HELLO MARS. HELLO...

GREETINGS, VISITORS FROM EARTH! WE ON MARS BID YOU WELCOME! YOUR ARRIVAL IS EAGERLY AWAITED!





'PRE-ATOMIC EARTH WAS POPULATED BY MANY FORMS OF ANIMAL AND PLANT LIFE. IN EARTH'S HISTORY, ONE OF THESE ANIMAL FORMS EVOLVED TO THE POINT WHERE IT BECAME DOMINANT OVER ALL OTHERS...'



'WITH HIS DOMINATION, MAN BEGAN TO DEVELOP. HE REACHED INTO THE UNKNOWN AND HE LEARNED. HE STUDIED. HE BUILT...'



'HE ADVANCED SCIENTIFICALLY...'

LOOK, COLUMBUS!
LAND! YOU WERE
RIGHT!

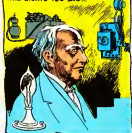
THEN THE
EARTH IS
ROUND! NOT
FLAT...



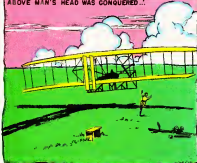
'AND YET, WITH ALL HIS GREAT ADVANCES, MAN OFTEN REVERTED TO HIS PRIMITIVE STATE. HE INDULGED IN THE WHOLESALE SLAUGHTER OF HIS FELLOWS! HE CALLED IT...WAR...'



'BUT IN SPITE OF THESE TEMPORARY REGRESSIONS, MAN CONTINUED TO ADVANCE. GREAT NEW SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENTS WERE DISCOVERED. THE LIGHTS YOU SAW...'



'THE PROBLEM OF FLIGHT WAS SOLVED. THE AIR ABOVE MAN'S HEAD WAS CONQUERED...'



'AND THEN, DURING ONE OF THESE REGRESSIONS... THESE WARS... A GREAT NEW FIELD WAS OPENED. A HORRIBLE WEAPON WAS DEvised.'

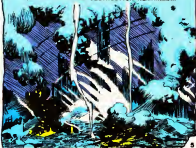


'THE GREAT NEW WEAPON HALTED THAT WAR. BUT PEACE DID NOT COME. INSTEAD GAME POLITICAL WRANGLING, NATION AGAINST NATION...'

THIS IS IT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!
THE RUSSIAN DELEGATE IS GETTING
UP... AND... HE IS LEAVING THE
CONFERENCE TABLE!



'AND SO, THE HOLOCAUST DESCENDED UPON EARTH. AN ATOMIC WAR, THAT WAS WHAT YOU SAW, AND IN ITS WAKE, ONLY DEATH AND DESTRUCTION REMAINED...'



PRACTICALLY ALL LIFE WAS WIPED AWAY! BUT AS I SAID BEFORE, A FEW OF US SURVIVED!



WE CAN SEE YOUR ROCKET, EARTHLING! YOU ARE GETTING CLOSE!

AND SO, IN THE FOLLOWING NINETY FIVE THOUSAND YEARS, WE STARTED ANEW... BUILT A NEW AND GREATER CIVILIZATION!



YOU WILL BE LANDING, SOON!

IT WAS EASY TO BEGIN AGAIN! WE KNEW ALL THE MISTAKES! WE KNEW ALL THE FAULTS! WE WERE DETERMINED NOT TO MAKE THEM OURSELVES!



HOW SMALL YOUR SHIP IS!

WE ARE COMING IN NOW, MARTIAN! WE WILL BE AMONG YOU SHORTLY! I WILL SIGN OFF NOW! SEE YOU...



SAFE LANDING, EARTHLING!



THE SHIP CAME OUT OF THE MARTIAN NIGHT. IT CAME ON BLUE FLAME AND WHITE HEAT. AND IT DROPPED SMOOTHLY TO THE RED SAND...



THEY ARE DOWN!

HURRY!

THE SHIP WAS SCARCELY TWENTY FEET HIGH! IT SAT AMID THE SMOKE AND THE RED DUST, AND THEN A PORT OPENED...



GREETINGS, MARTIANS!

GREETINGS, EARTHLINGS!

THE GREY FORMS DROPPED TO THE MARTIAN SURFACE. THEIR WHISKERS TWITCHED AND THEIR BEADY EYES GLOWED IN FRIENDSHIP...



WELCOME! WELCOME TO MARS!

THEY WERE OF EARTH'S GREAT RACE. THEY WERE RATS! - THE END -

SLEEP NO MORE!

**A CRIME
SUSPENSE STORY**



I WONDERED IF MRS. MONAHAN HAD CALLED THE POLICE. MRS. MONAHAN WAS MY LANDLADY. I LIVED ON THE TOP FLOOR OF HER ROOMING HOUSE, PAID \$10 A WEEK FOR ONE ROOM, THAT INCLUDED SUPPERS, OF COURSE. I'D LIVED AT MRS. MONAHAN'S FOR TWO YEARS. I KNEW THEY WERE POLICE THE MINUTE I OPENED THE DOOR...

THAT'S MR. FINNER NOW! HE LIVES ACROSS THE HALL FROM HER!

ER... MR. FINNER? MAY WE ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS?



I TRIED TO ACT SURPRISED AND INNOCENT. BUT I KNEW WHAT THEY WERE AFTER...

QUESTIONS? WHY, NOT AT ALL? ABOUT WHAT?

ABOUT IRENE LAUTON. HOW WELL DID YOU KNOW HER?



IRENE LAUTON WAS MISSING. SHE'D RENTED A ROOM FROM MRS. MONAHAN... RIGHT ACROSS THE HALL FROM ME, AS A MATTER OF FACT... AND THEN, SUDDENLY, SHE'D DISAPPEARED. HER CLOTHES WERE STILL THERE, IN HER ROOM... BUT SHE'D NEVER COME BACK FOR THEM...

MISS LAUTON? WHY... I DIDN'T KNOW HER WELL AT ALL! ONLY TO SAY HELLO, THAT IS.

WHEN DID YOU SEE HER LAST, MR. FINNER?



SATURDAY NIGHT. THAT'S... ER... THREE NIGHTS AGO. SHE WAS COMING OUT OF HER ROOM AS I WAS GOING IN... TO GO TO SLEEP. WE GREETED EACH OTHER. THAT'S ALL. WHY? WHY ALL THESE QUESTIONS?

IRENE LAUTON SEEMS TO HAVE VANISHED OFF THE FACE OF THIS EARTH, MR. FINNER. NO ONE HAS SEEN HER SINCE SATURDAY NIGHT. WE SUSPECT FOUL PLAY!



YOU MEAN...?

MISS LAUTON WAS AN UP-AND-COMING YOUNG ACTRESS, MR. FINNER. SHE HAD EVERYTHING TO LIVE FOR. WHY, SHE'D JUST BEEN SIGNED FOR A GOOD PART IN A BROADWAY PLAY.

SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO SHOW UP AT A PARTY... IN HER HONOR. SHE NEVER CAME. PEOPLE WITH EVERYTHING TO LIVE FOR JUST DON'T VANISH, MR. FINNER. THAT'S WHY WE'RE INVESTIGATING. HER PRODUCER CALLED US IN.

OH, DEAR! I... I DO HOPE NOTHING'S HAPPENED TO HER!

SO DO WE, MR. FINNER. MEANWHILE YOU AND THE REST OF THE BOARDERS BETTER STICK AROUND THIS PLACE TILL WE CLEAR THIS UP AND FIND MISS LAUTON. UNDERSTAND?

OH, YES, SIR!



AS I STARTED UP THE THREE FLIGHTS OF STAIRS TO MY TOP FLOOR ROOM, I COULD HEAR THE DETECTIVES BELOW QUESTIONING MRS. MONAHAN, AND HER ANSWERING THEM...

YOU SAY YOU SAW MISS LAUTON LEAVE FOR THE PARTY, MRS. MONAHAN?

THAT'S RIGHT. SHE LEFT ABOUT NINE. MR. FINNER HAD JUST GONE UP. SHE CAME DOWN... LAUGHING... SO NAPPY... SOB...



IRENE LAUTON! HOW WELL I REMEMBERED IRENE. ESPECIALLY THAT NIGHT. I WAS UNLOCKING THE DOOR TO MY ROOM WHEN SHE CAME OUT OF HERS. BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL, IRENE...

WHY, MISS LAUTON! HOW... ER... LOVELY YOU LOOK TONIGHT!

OH, MR. FINNER! THANK YOU. CONGRATULATE ME! I'VE BEEN SIGNED! I'M GOING TO A PARTY NOW... TO CELEBRATE...



I STOOD AT THE TOP OF THE THIRD FLIGHT OF STAIRS LISTENING TO THE POLICE BELOW...

OKAY, MRS. MONAHAN! WE'LL BE BACK! DON'T LET ANYONE INTO HER ROOM!

AND CALL US IF YOU NOTICE ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS!

I WILL! YES! GOOD-BYE!



I LOOKED ACROSS THE HALL TO IRENE LAUTON'S DOOR. I REMEMBERED HOW I'D ALWAYS LOOKED AT THAT DOOR LONGINGLY, EVER SINCE SHE'D MOVED IN. SHE WAS SO BEAUTIFUL... ESPECIALLY THAT NIGHT...

OH, MISS LAUTON! HOW WONDERFUL FOR YOU! IS IT A GOOD PART?

SECOND TO THE LEAD!



I... I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU, MISS LAUTON! MAY I... MAY I TELL YOU SOMETHING?

I'VE REALLY GOT TO RUN, MR. FINNER. I'M LATE! WHAT IS IT? MAKE IT QUICK!



I REMEMBER HOW I'D SEEN HER DAY AFTER DAY... WEEK AFTER WEEK... SO YOUNG... SO LOVELY... AND HOW I'D WANTED TO TELL HER BUT NEVER FOUND THE WORDS... UNTIL THAT NIGHT... WHEN I SCRAPED UP ENOUGH COURAGE...

I... I WANT YOU TO KNOW, IRENE, THAT EVER SINCE YOU MOVED IN TO THIS BOARDING HOUSE, THAT I'VE LOVED YOU WITH ALL MY HEART! I WAS HOPING THAT YOU, IN TIME...

HUH? WHAT? ME... LOVE YOU? OH, MR. FINNER... HOW FUNNY!



I REMEMBER HOW SHE LAUGHED. HOW LOUD SHE LAUGHED. AND HOW SHE LOOKED AT ME... AND THE RIDICULE THAT WAS IN HER EYES. AND HOW SHE TURNED AND HURRIED AWAY, DOWN THE STAIRS... AND HOW HER LAUGHTER DRIFTED BACK TO ME...

IRENE... CHOKE! IRENE! WAIT! DON'T LAUGH... AT ME...



THE DOOR SLAMMING THREE FLIGHTS BELOW WOKE ME FROM MY REVERIE. THE POLICE WERE GONE. I WENT INTO MY ROOM. I LOCKED IT BEHIND ME. I WENT TO MY BUREAU AND DUG DOWN DEEP AND BROUGHT OUT THE LACE HANDKERCHIEF WITH THE HEAVY PERFUME. AND ITS SWEET SMELL FILLED MY NOSTRILS AND BROUGHT IRENE BACK TO ME... RIGHT INTO MY ROOM...

AFTER A WHILE I HID THE HANDKERCHIEF AND WENT TO BED. THAT NIGHT I TOSSED AND TURNED IN A FRETFUL NIGHTMARE OF IRENE, LAUGHING... AND HER LAUGHTER TURNING TO SCREAMS... AND THEN, SILENCE. THEN BLOOD... A POOL OF BLOOD. AND I AWOKE WITH A START IN THE MORNING TO SEE IT...

DARLING... DARLING, IRENE!



OH, MY GOD!



THERE WAS A SICKENING RED BLOTCH OF BLOOD OZZING OUT FROM THE CEILING ABOVE MY BED...

I LEAPED OUT OF BED AND SLIPPED ON A ROBE. I PEERED DOWN THE HALL. NO ONE WAS IN SIGHT. THE BATHROOM WAS EMPTY...



I HURRIED DOWN THE HALL AND WET A SPONGE. I CAME BACK INTO MY ROOM. I CLIMBED ONTO MY BED. I COULD JUST TOUCH THE CEILING. I SCRUBBED...



SOON, THE SPOT WAS GONE. I BREATHED EASIER AFTER THAT. I DRESSED AND HURRIED DOWNSTAIRS. I WAS LATE ALREADY...



I DIDN'T WANT MRS. MONAHAN TO SEE THE WET SPOT ON THE CEILING WHERE THE BLOOD STAIN HAD BEEN. THAT NIGHT, WHEN I CAME HOME, THE POLICE WERE THERE AGAIN...



BUT I DIDN'T TELL THEM WHAT HAPPENED ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES AFTER IRENE HAD LEFT! I DIDN'T TELL THEM HOW I HAD HEARD FOOTSTEPS OUT IN THE HALL AND HOW I'D OPENED MY DOOR...



I DIDN'T TELL THEM HOW MY BLOOD BURNED AS IT POUNDED INTO MY FACE, OUT AND INTO MY HEART, DOWN TO MY FINGERTIPS, AND THROUGH MY BODY. SHE STOOD THERE, HER SKIRT PULLED UP, REVEALING HER SHAPELY LEG. I DIDN'T TELL THEM HOW I STUMBLED FORWARD, AWKWARDLY...



AND I DIDN'T TELL THEM HOW SHE LAUGHED AT MY AWKWARD ATTEMPT AND SLAMMED THE DOOR IN MY FACE. AND HOW I WENT BACK INTO MY ROOM AND STARED OUT OF THE WINDOW, DOWN AT THE BACK YARD. HOW I SAW MRS. MONAHAN THERE, SITTING IN THE COOL NIGHT AIR, WITH THE OTHERS... THE OTHER BOARDERS. THEY WERE PLAYING CARDS LIKE THEY ALWAYS DID. I KNEW THEN THAT NO ONE ELSE HAD SEEN IRENE RETURN...



THE POLICE WENT AWAY, AND I WENT TO BED, AND AGAIN I HAD THAT HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE...LAUGHING AND SCREAMING...AND BLOOD... AND WHEN I AWOK IN THE MORNING...

OH, LORD! IT'S THERE AGAIN!

THE POOL OF BLOOD BLOTTING ACROSS THE WHITE CEILING LOOKED LIKE SOME HORRIBLE WOUND IN A FAIR SKIN. IRENE'S SKIN...

I'VE GOT TO CLEAN IT OFF! IT MUST BE SEEPING THROUGH!

I RUBBED WITH THE SPONGE AS I HAD DONE THE MORNING BEFORE, BUT THIS TIME IT *DIDN'T* COME OFF...

WHAT WILL I DO? THEY'LL SEE IT... AND THEY'LL KNOW...

I DRESSED QUICKLY AND HURRIED DOWNSTAIRS TO THE HARDWARE STORE. I HAD TO WAIT FIFTEEN MINUTES FOR IT TO OPEN UP. I NEARLY WENT CRAZY FROM NERVOUSNESS. I KEPT WONDERING IF MRS. MONAHAN WOULD COME INTO MY ROOM TO CLEAN IT AND SEE THE BLOOD AND KNOW...

OKAY, MISTER! I'M SORRY I'M LATE! CAR TROUBLE! WHAT'LL IT BE?

A CAN OF WHITE PAINT, PLEASE, AND A BRUSH, AND HURRY!

I RUSHED BACK TO THE BOARDING HOUSE. MRS. MONAHAN WAS JUST GOING UP THE STAIRS WITH HER CARPET SWEEPER AND BROOM WHEN I PUSHED PAST HER. I WAS IN TIME. I SLAMMED INTO MY ROOM AND LOCKED THE DOOR FROM THE INSIDE, AND THEN I PAINTED OUT THAT AWFUL BLOODY SPOT...

THERE! THERE! IT'S GONE!

MRS. MONAHAN POUNDED ON MY DOOR AND INSISTED THAT I LET HER CLEAN THE ROOM SINCE IT HADN'T BEEN CLEANED THE PREVIOUS DAY, SO I FINALLY LET HER IN. SHE STARED, FIRST AT MY PAINT-SPLATTERED HANDS, THEN AT THE PAINT CAN, AND THEN AT THE WHITE SPOT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE YELLOWED CEILING...

THERE WAS A NET SPOT! I THOUGHT I'D TOUGH IT UP!

LOOKS AWFUL! YOU'LL HAVE TO DO THE WHOLE CEILING, NOW! AND MIND YOU! CAREFUL OF THAT BED-SPREAD! IT'S BRAND NEW!

I LOST HALF A DAY'S PAY PAINTING THAT CEILING UNDER MRS. MONAHAN'S WATCHFUL EYE. BUT AT LEAST SHE NEVER KNEW ABOUT THE BLOODSTAIN. THEN, THE NEXT MORNING, AFTER ANOTHER SICKENING NIGHTMARRISH SLEEP...

OH, MY GOD! MY GOD!

IT WAS BACK AGAIN! THE BLOODSTAIN! IT SPREAD OVER THE DRY NEW WHITE PAINT BIGGER THAN EVER. AND IT WAS DRIPPING... DRIPPING ON MRS. MONAHAN'S BED-SPREAD...

I STARTED TO PAINT! I USED UP THE REST OF THE CAN. I COVERED THE BLOOD AND IT STOPPED DRIPPING...

THERE! THANK HEAVENS! IT'S STOPPED! AND I CAN'T SEE IT, NOW!



THEN I DRESSED AND GATHERED UP MRS. MONAHAN'S BLOOD-SPATTERED SPREAD. I RUSHED DOWNSTAIRS WITH IT...

HERE! WHERE'RE YOU GOING WITH THAT BED-SPREAD?

OH! I. I'M TAKING IT INTO THE CLEANERS, MRS. MONAHAN! I DID GET SOME PAINT ON IT, AFTER ALL!



I BURIED THAT BEDSPREAD IN A LOT UP THE STREET! I KNEW I COULDN'T TAKE IT INTO A DRY-CLEANERS... NOT WITH THESE BLOOD STAINS ALL OVER IT LIKE THAT! THEN THEY'D KNOW, SO I BURIED IT...

THERE! NO ONE WILL FIND IT HERE!



I WENT DOWNTOWN AND SHOPPED TILL I FOUND THE STORE WHERE MRS. MONAHAN HAD BOUGHT THE SPREAD... AND I BOUGHT A NEW ONE. AND THAT NIGHT, I MOVED THE BED...

CAN'T... UGH... TAKE ANY CHANCES! IF... IT... UGH... DRIPS TONIGHT, I'LL BE READY!



I SLIPPED DOWNSTAIRS AFTER EVERYONE HAD GONE TO BED, AND I TOOK A POT FROM THE STOVE. I CAME BACK AND PUT IT UNDER THE SPOT WHERE THE BLOODSTAIN DROZED OUT OVER THE CEILING...



AND THEN I WENT TO BED. ALL NIGHT I DREAMED THAT SAME CRAZY DREAM, AND IN THE MORNING I AWOK TO THE STEADY THROBBING OF THE BLOOD DRIPPING INTO THE POT. IT WAS HALF FULL, AND THE STAIN SPREAD OVER THE WHITE, WHITE CEILING...

GOT TO STOP IT! GOT TO STOP IT!



BUT I'D USED UP THE PAINT! SO I RUSHED DOWNSTAIRS AND OUT TO THE HARDWARE STORE. AND WHEN I CAME BACK WITH THE NEW CAN, THEY WERE WAITING FOR ME... IN MY ROOM...

MR. FINNER. WE'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU!

OH, GOD, NO! YOU... YOU SAW IT!



THEY WERE SITTING ON THE BED AND THE POT BESIDE THEM WAS ALMOST FULL. I LOOKED UP AND THEY FOLLOWED MY GLANCE. THE BLOODSTAIN GLOWED ANGRY RED...

SAW WHAT, MR. FINNER? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

THE BLOOD! THEN YOU KNOW! YOU KNOW I KILLED HER!



THEY LOOKED AT EACH OTHER, AND THEN AT ME...

WOULD YOU CARE TO TELL US ABOUT IT, MR. FINNER?

SHE LAUGHED AT ME! SHE DIDN'T THINK I WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR HER. SHE DIDN'T DESERVE TO BE SO BEAUTIFUL. SHE WAS CHEAP... AND SHE'D ONLY GIVE HER BEAUTY TO SOME ONE CHEAP... TO SOME ONE'S CHEAP CLAWING PAWS...



'SO I WAITED TILL SHE CAME OUT OF HER ROOM THAT NIGHT! OH YES, SHE'D RETURNED, SHE'D COME BACK TO PUT ON A NEW STOCKING. THE OLD ONE HAD GOTTEN A PUH. WHEN SHE CAME OUT I CALLED HER ...'

IRENE! LOOK, BUSTER! LAY OFF, HUH? YOU'RE NOT MY TYPE!



'I HELD OUT THE TISSUE-PAPER-WRAPPED BOX?'

IT'S FOR YOU, IRENE! A GIFT... FOR LUCK!

FOR ME, FINNER? HOW NICE...



'SHE CAME INTO MY ROOM. THE WINDOW WAS SHUT TIGHT AND THE BLINDS DRAWN SO THAT MRS. MONAHAN AND THE OTHERS WOULD NOT HEAR HER...'

WHAT IS IT, FINNER? WHAT... WHAT? GASP! MR. FINNER! PUT DOWN THAT KNIFE!

YOU'RE TOO LOVELY TO LET SOME ONE ELSE TOUGH YOU, IRENE!



SO I KILLED HER. I STABBED HER SO MANY TIMES, MY ARM HURT! THEN I PUT HER UP THERE... IN THE STORAGE ATTIC. THERE'S AN ENTRANCE THROUGH THAT CLOSET. I FOUND IT A FEW MONTHS AGO. NO ONE EVER USED IT! I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE SAFE THERE... UNTIL THE BLOOD STARTED DRIPPING...

BLOOD? DRIPPING? WHERE?

ONE OF THEM CLIMBED UP INTO THE ATTIC...

SHE'S HERE ALL RIGHT, GOSH! LOOKS LIKE A PIN CUSHION!

THERE! DON'T YOU SEE IT THERE... ON THE CEILING... DRIPPING INTO THAT POT?

MRS. MONAHAN CALLED US BECAUSE YOU WERE ACTING SUSPICIOUS, FINNER. SHE SAID YOU WASHED THE CEILING ONCE, PAINTED IT TWICE, AND TOOK HER NEW SPREAD OUT AND BURIED IT! WE DUG IT UP, FINNER, LISTEN. THERE'S NO BLOODSTAIN ON THAT CEILING. NO BLOOD IN THAT POT. IT'S IN YOUR MIND. YOU'RE SICK, FINNER... YOU'D BETTER COME ALONG WITH US.



THEY SAID THERE WERE NEVER ANY BLOOD STAINS. THEY SAID THAT HALF-FULL POT WAS EMPTY. BUT I DIDN'T BELIEVE THEM. WHY SHOULD I? THEY'RE ALL CRAZY! —THE END—



YOU SAY IT'S A 45-MINUTE BUS TRIP, WITH A TRANSFER, TO THE COMIC BOOK SHOP? YOU SAY IT'S A HARROWING 30-MINUTE DRIVE ON THE EXPRESSWAY TO THE MALL, AND THEN A 30-MINUTE MERRY-GO-ROUND RIDE TO FIND A PARKING PLACE? YOU SAY YOUR TOWN DOESN'T EVEN HAVE A COMIC BOOK SHOP OR BOOKSTORE? IS THAT WHAT'S TROUBLING YOU, BUNKY? WELL, THEN, YOU SHOULD.



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